

VCH Shropshire Newsletter June 2016



Professor Keith Lilley *addressing the audience at the launch of the new VCH Shropshire project.*

Professor Richard Hoyle – VCH Shropshire Chairman – writes about recent developments

The last few months have been exciting ones for VCH Shropshire as – to use building metaphors – we have laid the foundations and started on the walls of our new building.

Many of you will recall the splendid afternoon we had on 31 October with two fine lectures – on townscapes and urban morphology by Professor Keith Lilley (Queen's University Belfast) and on Shrewsbury itself by our patron Dr Barrie Trinder. We had a good

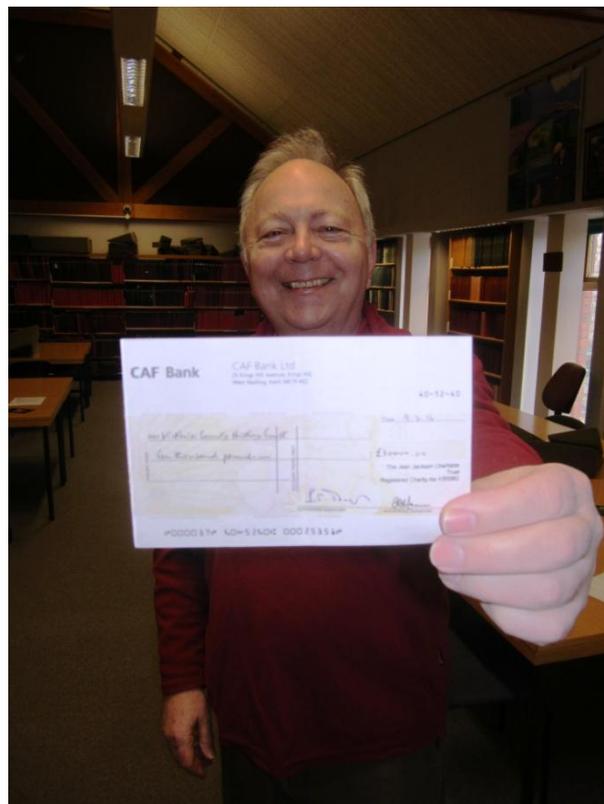
turnout – we came close to hoping for rain as we had doubts whether we could fit everyone in the room! But we did, by a whisker. Your committee was grateful to both speakers for attending and for the enthusiastic turnout. We hope that the VCH lecture will become an annual fixture for our supporters, at which we will report on the year's progress.

On the financial side, we have received a substantial grant over three years from The Jean Jackson Trust, whom we thank enormously and a smaller one-off grant from the Walker Trust. The Walker Trust has been a

consistent supporter of VCH in Shropshire for many years and we are delighted that they are willing to contribute to a new stage of the project. We have also received some smaller donations. To borrow someone else's slogan, 'every little helps!'

This has allowed us to proceed and appoint two new researchers – Dr Judith Everard and Wendy Horton – to work on aspects of Wem with the aim of producing a Wem 'short' in 2017. Judith will be acting as co-ordinator for the whole volume (and contributing much of the text). Wendy will be working more closely on the buildings and the townscape. The two researchers introduce themselves at the end of this column. We look forward to justifying the confidence that the two Trusts and many individuals have shown in us.

We have also started the important task of developing a team of volunteers to underpin our research effort. Of course, we have a mass of material, gathered by the old VCH Office to draw on, but this needs updating and new sources searching. We have had two meetings of volunteers in 2016 and now have a great deal of activity co-ordinated by my colleague James Parker. This includes work on the Wem census and land tax led by Penny Ward, on trade directories and Wendy Horton is making a brave stab at trying to relate the 1805 survey (which has lost its map) to the later map of 1832 by John Wood. She tells us more about this later in this newsletter. James Ballantyne is looking at questions of medieval provision and public health and Rosemary Thornes is researching communications. We also have some work developing on other villages in north Shropshire which we hope will either come to fruition as further VCH shorts or contributions to red books. Future newsletters will, I hope, tell you all about this developing research. And we continue to develop our public profile. We are contributing to the Wem history day to be held in Wem itself on Sunday 26 June in partnership with the Friends of Shropshire Archives. And we do envisage making a return to Wem in 2017 to announce some of the conclusions of our research.



Who is this happy chappy? Not a pools winner, but our Treasurer, Nigel Hinton, receiving his first cheque. VCH Shropshire is go!

Early days, but we already have something interesting about Wem to tell our audience at the end of June. One good piece of luck is that James Bowen has been able to recover from private hands the archive of Samuel Garbet (1684/5-c.1751), second master at Wem Grammar School and curate of Edstanton. This is now in the Shropshire Archives. James has also been georectifying the 1632 Wem map (never heard of georectification? all will be explained!) and will be talking about his findings on the landscape of Wem in the early seventeenth century. I have been looking at the map as well, using the older technology of felt tips and photocopies, but I have also been gathering data on Wem from the National Archives and Arundel Castle in Sussex. I am delighted to say that I can even tell you when Wem was enclosed to within a year or two. All will be revealed on 26 June. Judith Everard is already puzzling over one of the Wem mysteries – the market charter, allegedly of 1204. Or 1205-6. Or 1208. Or maybe of the later 1230s. Time will tell.

Research is fun, and writing less fun, but least fun of all is the day-to-day work of the

committee. It is, however, vitally important. As a new organisation, much of the work of putting the appropriate legal arrangements in place has fallen on Nigel Hinton and I am sure that he would want to acknowledge the valuable advice we have received from another committee member, David Saunders. I hope that we will be able to announce in the autumn that we have secured charitable status which will make our work, and applications to grant-giving bodies, much easier. Nigel Semmens has taken charge of our publicity and has been very successful in developing our profile in the Shropshire press and on local radio. The committee has recently been strengthened by the addition to our membership of Sarah Lane as Secretary. I am personally most grateful to all the committee members for their commitment to making a success of VCH Shropshire.

Richard Hoyle



Judith Everard

Appointment of researchers

VCH Shropshire is delighted to announce that it has appointed its first two researchers.

Judith Everard has been appointed to produce the first VCH short, on the north Shropshire market town of Wem. With the assistance of colleagues and volunteers working in Shrewsbury and Wem, this volume should be in print by the autumn of 2017. Judith's responsibilities also include reviewing the sources for North Bradford Hundred in the north-east of the county. This part of Shropshire has received least attention from the VCH in the past and hence is the area of most interest going forwards.

Born in Birmingham but raised in Western Australia – where she was educated and practised as a solicitor – Judith is a relative newcomer to Shropshire. She moved to Castlefields in Shrewsbury in 2014, having lived just across the border, near Berriew, since 2006. Prior to that, Judith worked in Cambridge as a fellow of Fitzwilliam College

and research assistant to the late Professor Sir James Holt, with whom she co-authored *Jersey 1204. The Forging of an Island Community* (2004). She writes: 'I am very excited to be working again on researching and writing the history of a particular community. As well as being an enthusiast for Shrewsbury and Shropshire, I have always wanted to work for the VCH and, thanks to the efforts of the Chairman and the Shropshire VCH committee to relaunch the VCH here, I am fortunate to be able to achieve this ambition.'

Being asked, as one of my first tasks, to look into the Wem market charter awarded by King John does feel a bit like a practical joke on the new girl – the more one pursues it, the more elusive this important early source seems to be. Still, there is plenty more material on Wem to keep me busy and I look forward to learning more about it from those who have been working on aspects of the history of Wem and north-eastern Shropshire.'



Wendy Horton

Wendy Horton is an archaeologist and historic buildings specialist with over 25 years of experience. She has previously undertaken listing re-survey work in Wales, along with extensive archaeological surveys for the Royal Commission (RCAHM Wales). During the 1990s, she was Senior Archaeologist at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. Wendy will be writing an account of the built environment and building history of Wem, using information from fieldwork, the Shropshire Historic Environment Record, previous historic buildings research, documentary sources and publications. The data from the 1805 survey, although a separate VCH Shropshire project, will feed into this account, providing useful evidence of settlement development in Wem.



Sarah Lane

Appointment of Secretary to the County Committee

VCH Shropshire is delighted to announce that it has secured the services of Sarah Lane as Secretary to the County Committee for VCH Shropshire.

Sarah's academic background includes a BA (Hons) degree, followed by a Masters in Architectural History and Medieval History gained at York University. Following this, she trained as a solicitor in London and later took on the role of Parliamentary Assistant to the MP for Shrewsbury. More recently, Sarah has relocated to Shropshire and works at the Music Hall in Shrewsbury, where she forms part of the Music Hall Research Group. 'I am very pleased to take up the opportunity of working with VCH Shropshire. I have always held great enthusiasm for Shrewsbury and am keen to combine my academic and career experience in this role'.

Wem Study Day: Wem Town Hall, Sunday 26 June.

10am. Registration at the Town Hall.

10.30. Professor Richard Hoyle, Professor of Regional and Local History, University of London: 'The Victoria County History in Shropshire – Why Wem?'

11.30. Refreshments.

11.45 Dr James Bowen, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Liverpool: 'The landscape and townscape of Wem in 1631 and the 18th-19th centuries'.

12.30 Lunch.

13.15 Walking tours arranged by Wem Civic Society.

1. Wem's pubs and breweries; 2. The High Street walk; 3. The Church walk.

15.00 Dr Jonathan Worton, University of Chester: 'The Women of Wem and a few Musketeers: The Civil War battle for Wem of October 1643'.

Tickets cost £15 with lunch or £10 without. To book contact Pat Kiernan by email patk1@blueyonder.co.uk or alternatively by telephone 01952 252814.

Research in progress: The 1805 survey of Wem

A 'Copy of a Survey of the Parish of Wem, 1805', by John Welch, is a document held by Shropshire Archives which contains a wealth of information regarding property owners, occupiers, types and rateable values. The document is broken down by township, Wem township further divided into town and rural area. Each property (buildings in the town and fields in the surrounding countryside) is identified by a unique number, but unfortunately the map which accompanied the survey has been lost. A rate is payable on each property, with the exception of the Workhouse, suggesting that the survey may have been used for collecting a Poor Rate.

Regarding its date, the document is entitled a 'Copy of a Survey', so the information provided within may pre-date 1805 and may have been used originally for a different purpose. Whatever the case, this is an early, comprehensive and therefore extremely useful dataset linking individuals and properties.

The section on Wem town, which has 266 entries, has now been transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet. It is hoped that the names transcribed can be cross-referenced with lists of names from other VCH Shropshire Projects, perhaps leading to a searchable database.

A comparison has been made between the 1805 Survey and a map dated 1834, 'Plan of Wem from an Actual Survey', by John Wood. The function of the map is unclear, but buildings and gardens in the town centre are marked in some detail, some (but by no means all) labelled with their proprietor. Larger landowners seem to be given some prominence. Although there is approximately one generation between the dates of the two surveys, it has been possible to correlate some of the names. In many cases, property has been retained within the family, passing from one individual to another.

One interesting series of property numbers on the 1805 survey can be followed on the 1834 map, working along the north side of the High Street, from west to east. Most refer to 'House and Garden', but there are several inns and the occasional shop or yard. In general, more Public Houses are marked on the 1834 map, but some were preceded by malt-houses noted in the 1805 survey.

There are several large landowners in Wem during the early nineteenth century. Notable names which appear in both 1805 and 1834 are Mrs Drury, Messrs Walmsley, Dickin and Darlington and members of the Walford and Ireland families. Some new landowners have appeared by 1834, including Mr Tiler, who

holds a considerable number of properties, Mr Tyrer and Mr Wilkinson. Any information on these individuals which comes to light from other VCH projects would be particularly welcome.

Data from the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has now been uploaded onto GIS software and will be cross-referenced with the 1805 survey and 1834 map. The township of Wem tithe map of 1842 will be another rich and comprehensive source of data, along with historic Ordnance Survey maps. The final objective of this project is to link the properties described in the 1805 survey with existing buildings on the ground.

Volunteers wanted

We have some excellent volunteers beavering away for us on Wem, but more are needed!

Richard Hoyle would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in transcribing some of the materials he gathered at Arundel castle. They are, he says, 'in a good mid-seventeenth century hand, and present few problems'. The volunteer(s) would work off images he made whilst he was there, so this work can be undertaken anywhere. A set up with two screens (which might be a laptop with an external screen) would make it an easy task. If interested, then contact Richard direct on Richard.Hoyle@sas.ac.uk.

Judith Everard would like to hear from anyone who is willing to work through some of the materials from the VCH Shropshire office held at Shropshire archives looking for Wem (or North Bradford hundred) materials. Details from her: Judith.everard@gmail.com.

There are a good number of other jobs that would help VCH: contact James Parker at james.parker@market-interface.com if you would like to help, specifying whether you have access to the Shropshire Archives or whether you are willing to work from digital images, and the sort of materials you feel comfortable working with.

**Inaugural VCH Shropshire Annual Lecture,
University Centre Shrewsbury, The Guildhall, 29 October 2016.**



An early nineteenth English school oil on canvas painting of Tong Castle, Shropshire. Private Collection/ Miles Wynn Cato Gallery Ludlow.

**Lancelot Capability Brown – A Tercentenary Consideration of Britain’s Greatest
Landscape Gardener and His Shropshire Connections.**

A Lecture by Gareth J. L. Williams

2016 marks the tercentenary of the birth of Britain's greatest landscape gardener, Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. Whilst Shropshire has no Chatsworth or Burghley, Brown enjoyed links with several influential Shropshire residents and assisted with bringing to the fore the ‘capabilities’ of a good few acres within the county boundary. His legacy and his influence will be considered in this illustrated lecture where Gareth Williams assesses his impact on Shropshire and national history.

Gareth Williams is Curator and Head of Learning to the Weston Park Foundation.

The venue will be open from 1.30pm, with the VCH Annual Meeting beginning at 2.00pm. Tea will then be served. The lecture will commence at 3.00pm and is expected to finish by 4.30 pm. Parking will be available in The Guildhall Car Park. Please register via: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/vch-shropshire-annual-lecture-tickets-25928863930>. A donation of £5 for this event would be gratefully received.